

The greatest benefit that the people and the government can provide for the survivors of Katrina is a comprehensive support program which educates a generation of children to take productive positions in their new city of New Orleans and in the nation.

#### MODELS FOR COMBINATION CHURCH/SCHOOL BASED PROJECTS FOR POSSIBLE FUNDING

#### I. SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATION SERVICES (SES) NETWORK USING RETIRED TEACHERS

##### *Program Purpose and Function*

Tutorial, After-School and Weekend Programs for low-performing, low-income students attending low performing schools. Church and Community Organization Sites could provide more intimate settings in close proximity to the homes of students.

##### *Possible Funding Sources*

Funding is mandated by the Department of Education (DOE) through all recipients of Title I Funds. Other DOE Funds could be made available. Title I funds will cover the cost of tutors; however, to establish and maintain a network with additional enticements and incentives for pupils would require some auxiliary funding.

##### *Administration and Operations*

The Local Education Agency will determine the contents and processes for the tutoring although State licensing or approval may also be required. Funding beyond the cost of tutors will allow for flexibility in creating enrichment activities and maximizing family and community involvement. It is particularly important to maintain continuity of the Supplementary Education Services presence during each Summer recess. Assuming the attachment to a parent entity which provides space, bookkeeping and financial services, the budget for a project serving 50 children should be enough to finance: A coordinator's salary; stipend for two parents; phone and computer services; indoor game materials; field trips, snacks for students and parents. An application should be submitted for \$150,000 to 250,000.

#### II. COUNSELING FOR CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

##### *Program Purpose and Functions*

This is an initiative that has been highlighted by the Bush Administration as a highly desirable function. There are no detailed guidelines in place and this allows for a great deal of creative flexibility. Advice and examples of models should be requested from the Department of Justice. Educators should insist that schools are in a pivotal position to play a major role in producing worthwhile results for such a program. This does not rule out collaborations and partnerships with agencies and churches serving prison inmates and ex-offenders.

##### *Possible Funding Sources*

Although the Department of Justice (DOJ) is the obvious starting point, possible funding should be explored with the departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The latter funds a number of programs for uplift and improvement in the low-income public housing under its jurisdiction.

##### *Administrative and Operations*

The professional advice of social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists must be at the core of such a project, however, community residents who are ex-offenders or the relatives of current inmates may make invaluable contributions. Assuming that the project will operate under the administrative and fiscal umbrella of an already established church or community organization (or the school system), the budget for a project serving 50 children should be enough to finance:

A coordinator; Stipends for Volunteers; Fees for Professional Consultants; Prison Visit Trips. An application should be submitted for \$200,000–300,000.

#### III. AUXILIARY DISCIPLINARY, PATROLLING, POLICING SERVICES USING PARENTS

##### *Program Purpose and Function*

Security is a major problem in many urban schools and many have chosen to use local police or private guards. Pilot projects are needed to show that utilizing parents, church members, and community residents would injure student self-esteem less and also cost less.

##### *Possible Funding Sources*

The Department of Education (DOE) is concerned about the increase of spending on security and should entertain new approaches. The Department of Justice (DOJ) will accept proposals which are in harmony with its juvenile delinquency prevention mandate. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) should be offered proposals which demonstrate the possibilities of training these same parents and community residents to be volunteer first responders for emergencies.

##### *Administration and Operations*

Where necessary, local school systems have already developed structures for maintaining security. The pilot programs proposed here should be funded long enough (one year) to prove that they can accomplish a better result for less money. A request should be made (for one school) for \$200,000–300,000.

#### IV. COOPERATIVE TECHNOLOGY, TRAINING AND REPAIR PROJECT

##### *Program Purpose and Function*

Large numbers of computers and other educational technology devices are grossly underutilized as a result of the absence of mechanics and technicians to make repairs and perform preventive maintenance. A church or community organization based project could provide an ongoing service for local schools while at the same time it trains a group of local residents.

##### *Possible Funding Sources*

The Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Labor (DOL) should be solicited for funds to accomplish this worthwhile objective. It is possible that the E-Rate discounted coverage of expenses could be utilized for such a project after the appropriate negotiations.

##### *Administration and Operations*

The project is obviously best suited for a cluster of schools with a reasonable critical mass of computers and other equipment to be maintained. A supervisor instructor with the necessary assistants and interns to serve a minimal cluster could be sustained with an annual appropriation of \$200,000–300,000.

### PUSHING AHEAD WITH AMERICA'S AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REICHERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to talk a little bit about all the great things that Americans are doing day in and day out to help our friends and neighbors from the gulf coast.

But first, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Republican Conference

for taking decisive action today to be sure that we continue to push ahead with our agenda here in this House, that agenda of spending reductions, immigration reform, and keeping our focus on national security. It is clear that we will not let partisan wrangling get in the way of progress, and that is exactly why the American people have elected us to serve in this body. We are focused on their agenda.

I think it is important too, Mr. Speaker, to let the American people know that we have heard them loud and clear; and what they are wanting to see is action, decisive action on fiscal responsibility. They want fiscal accountability. After all, as so many of my constituents have reminded me in these last few days as we have talked about the pressing needs that we have in our country, this money is their money. It is not government's money.

□ 2030

It is the taxpayers' money, and it is our responsibility to be good stewards of that money. Many people have told me that they have just really grown ill and fatigued with seeing money spent and that they are not seeing it accounted for. They feel like it is time for bureaucrats to turn around and be responsible to taxpayers that are sitting at kitchen tables.

I have a lots of things I would like to respond to from my colleague across the aisle. He spoke about blunders that have taken place, and he seemed to have lost a little bit of hope with the U.S. and spoke negatively with how we have progressed with certain areas and positively of things that are happening in other areas in other countries. It just made me recall something that I remembered President Reagan would time and again say when he talked about spreading freedom and about what a noble goal, a noble goal it was to spread freedom to every corner of the world.

Mr. Speaker, you know, as we talk about what is happening in Iraq and as we talk about what is happening in Afghanistan, and we look at the agenda that our men and women in uniform carry out every day, as we look at how committed our President and his team have been to spreading freedom, we know that that is done because in the end having peace spread across this Nation, through the Middle East is going to give a peace dividend for our children and our grandchildren.

And in that peace dividend people find the opportunity to dream those big dreams. They find the opportunity to seek a better education, to seek opportunity, to build those businesses and to create a life that they would like to have for themselves and for their children. That is possible because of freedom. It is possible because of a commitment, a commitment that we make to move forward in spreading freedom.

My colleague also was talking about blunders and rebuilding and looking at

the wonderful gulf coast area and how it is going to be rebuilt. Mr. Speaker, I would just have to tell you, I feel that those are some mighty resilient folks down there in the gulf coast. They are people who when that stormed passed through and it cleared away, I know many of the folks down in southern Mississippi that I was working with, they threw that chain saw in the back of that pickup truck, they grabbed their work gloves, they grabbed their work boots, they got out there and they started cutting trees. They started clearing the way. They went to work. They were not waiting for somebody else. They went to work.

Now, as we get to the rebuilding phase, it is important that we be innovative, that we be creative, that we bring some great solutions to the table, that we think about tax incentives, that we think about enterprise zones, that we think about going in here and encouraging ownership.

What can we do to encourage private property ownership? What can we do to encourage businesses to redevelop?

Possibly, Mr. Speaker, going into this area is a great place to go and run a pilot project to see how a flat tax would work so that we are making it easier on hard-working men and women, making it easier on families to come back and reestablish those homes and reestablish those businesses and rebuild those communities. Because right now they are looking at physical infrastructure that has been damaged. Their economic infrastructure has been damaged. The social infrastructure of their community has been damaged. They want to take ownership of those projects.

I commend the good communities along the gulf coast region, whether they are in Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, or Texas. Communities are coming together to meet their needs. And I want to talk a little bit about those Americans and the folks that have taken time to show compassion and caring. And I want to express some things tonight. I think it is important for us to stand and thank all of the churches and the not-for-profit organizations and the faith-based organizations who have led the way, who have led the way in caring for those who have provided shelter, who have provided money, have continued to raise money, that have donated supplies, and people who have even traveled into areas to help with caring, to help with feeding those that need to be fed, to help with clean up, and are committed to staying with these communities as they rebuild.

You know, photos do not do the degree of damage justice. I think that during this process that we have been through for the past month, we have seen government make some mistakes. We have seen government do some things right, and I know that most of us have probably been both impressed and sorely disappointed at the very same time. And I think one of the

things that we have seen is that we have seen ordinary people do some truly extraordinary things.

I will have to tell you, as I said earlier, for me there is a personal connection to all of this. I grew up down in south Mississippi, and I was a high school girl when Hurricane Camille hit. And I can tell you from what I have seen, Katrina is much worse than my memories of Hurricane Camille. And just a few days after Katrina struck, I was down at where I grew up in southern Mississippi.

I went down there with my family so that we could help those in my home community. We took in supplies, and we went down to assist. My parents are long-time Red Cross volunteers; and they had been working at the shelter before the storm hit, trying to help those who were fleeing out of Gulf Port and Biloxi right along the coastal areas.

Even though my home community in southern Mississippi where I grew up suffered a lot of damage, those folks were there tending to others. It did not seem to matter that they did not have water, they did not have electricity, that some people did not have roofs. What they were doing was tending people that really had a need. They felt like that was the most important thing to do: tend to those that were injured; tend to those that were grieving; go clean things up and then let us get around to rebuilding.

The thing that I could not help but notice is the way that people from all walks of life were coming together to clear debris, to clear fallen structures. The spirit of America truly has been alive and well, even in the very tough days that we saw after Hurricane Katrina and we have seen this past week with Hurricane Rita. And since then we have learned more about some of these ordinary folks who stepped forward and did extraordinary things to help those who had lost their homes and their community.

In my district, which runs from the Mississippi border north to the Kentucky border, I have seen our communities across this entire district pull together to offer assistance. In many of our counties they have done so.

Mr. Speaker, that is what I am hearing from congressional Members all across this country. Forty-eight States have evacuees that are seeking refuge and a place to call home, maybe temporarily, maybe a little longer. They are all coming together, 48 States, communities across 48 States. A great example of this is our Memphis Corps of Engineers has been in New Orleans helping to repair the levees while our Shelby County, Memphis area non-profits and faith-based groups have been pitching in as well. They have been incredibly generous.

We have had so many, and I would like to list just a few: the Bellevue Baptist Church, the Cathedral of Faith Ministries, Christ United Methodist Church, the Cornerstone Institutional

Baptist Church, Cummings Street Baptist Church, Greater Harvest Church of God In Christ, the Greater Praise Church of God In Christ, the Independent Presbyterian Church, Memphis Union Mission, the Mid-South Baptist Association, and the Baptist Children's Home.

Mr. Speaker, it is like this in districts all across our country. All are working to provide shelter for evacuees. And then those that are coming forward with meals and shelters, the Friendship Baptist Church, the Germantown Presbyterian Church, Oakland First Baptist Church, and then the Breath of Life Seventh Day Adventist, Calvary Episcopal Church, the Holy Rosary Catholic church and School, and Hope Presbyterian Church, the Hutchinson School, and Impact Ministries of Memphis.

They are finding a way to feed volunteers and to feed evacuees. Mr. Speaker, all of this is such a testament to the greatness of our country. Up in the greater Nashville area, Montgomery County areas, they are in middle Tennessee, we have seen the Crieviewood Baptist Church, Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Clear View Baptist Church, Hildale Church of Christ all open their doors and provide shelter for those that were needing a temporary home.

We have also seen a wonderful evacuation center open in Franklin, Tennessee. I had the opportunity of inviting Secretary Mineta to join me as he had the opportunity to work with the Red Cross volunteers and look at this wonderful shelter, visit with our local elected officials, visit with the evacuees who had come out of Texas, out of Louisiana, out of Mississippi to call Franklin, Tennessee temporarily home.

We have also had the kitchen at Clear View Baptist Church and Near Ministry providing food; Grace Works Ministries collecting clothing and hygiene kits. Our Interfaith Dental Clinic providing acute care.

Mr. Speaker, while folks were receiving evacuees there, they were in the process of loading 18-wheelers and trucks and sending much needed supplies into the gulf coast area.

The Montgomery Bell Academy Service Club loaded an 18-wheeler full of supplies that were needed and sent it south into Jones County, Mississippi. This is happening all across the country in many districts.

I would like to mention a few of the things that some of our colleagues have done. In fact, just last Thursday my good friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT), rented two U-Haul trucks and went to a local food bank in Tyler, Texas. He then drove the trucks to Lufkin, Texas, which was out of food and water. They had received an influx of evacuees at several of their shelters. They were out of food and water and needed some help. So the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) unloaded the supplies and then went to the emergency operations center to meet with the local officials

to see what else it was they needed. So he found out.

After midnight he visited a shelter. He found out there were nearly 200 evacuees there. They did not have pillows and blankets. So off he went to the local Wal-Mart where he bought the supplies that were needed. He returned and distributed these to the folks that were there that were in need.

That is a good deal of work, and it is a great thing a good man did for some folks in need. I want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) and all of those across the country who like him are reaching out to help others. I also want to thank those in his district that helped him in meeting these needs.

We have also seen some of the Nation's largest companies really step up to the plate on this. We have watched Wal-Mart really do some fantastic work. They have now donated in excess of \$20 million in funds and in goods to help those that have been displaced, \$20 million. Motorola has provided \$1 million to an education fund to help rebuild schools and educate displaced children in the gulf coast region.

There again, another company that is stepping up to the plate to help. To date, they have provided several mission-critical responses to the gulf coast, including the delivery of replacement communications equipment to first responders, direct financial support to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund, and more than 300 Motorola employees and partners are on the front lines in the impacted areas to repair and restore communications.

It is going to be a heavy lift. There is a lot of devastation in this area; and, indeed, it is going to take each and every one of us working together as a team, working together as a team from the local, the State, and the Federal levels, from the private, not-for-profit and public sectors, and here in Congress from both sides of the aisle as we work to meet the needs of this region of our Nation.

We all know that for so many prescription drugs are critical for survival, and we know that many people escaped thinking they would return in a day or two and be back home, not thinking to bring documents, prescriptions, health care information with them. And of course, we know many times when you escape and you are leaving and evacuating for a hurricane, in a couple of days you are back.

□ 2045

This time was different, and so we have watched as the Nation's pharmaceutical companies have contributed \$120 million in refrigerated insulin, vaccines, antibiotics, antiseptics, non-prescription pain relievers, and millions of cans of infant formula.

One of our former colleagues here in the House, a Louisianan, Billy Tauzin, who had been a Republican Member from Louisiana, now works with these

pharmaceutical companies. He said, "We want to make certain that every single person who needs help gets it during the difficult weeks and months ahead."

I want to thank him and the companies he represents for their donations. They are literally saving lives.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell my colleagues firsthand, having been in some of these shelters, having talked with the medical teams that are there, having worked with them to find out what their needs are, they are incredibly appreciative of the medical supplies and the pharmaceuticals that have come into the shelters to help them, to help our medical professionals meet the needs that so many of the evacuees are having with their health care.

Mr. Speaker, another word on another Member of this body. The gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) has created an informal relief committee in his hometown of Peterborough, and I want to tell my colleagues a little bit about what he is doing. This is the kind of partnership that is going to make a tremendous difference.

The gentleman from New Hampshire's (Mr. BASS) rural New England town will provide essential resources to the small southern city of Collins, Mississippi. That little town is represented by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PICKERING). It is down in south Mississippi. They sustained a tremendous amount of devastation and damage in Hurricane Katrina.

The gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PICKERING) and the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. BASS) have worked to connect these two communities, and these two communities, miles apart, are forging a sister city relationship that will help ensure the swift delivery of goods and services to the citizens of Collins, Mississippi. Grateful citizens they are to the wonderful citizens of Peterborough, New Hampshire, and we thank them for that effort.

The gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) helped kick off "Hunger Drive 2005" for the hurricane victims by donating groceries, preparing meal packages and announcing that his Wilmington congressional office will serve as a satellite office in collecting goods.

The gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) said that, "In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we have all been searching for ways to help, and help in more ways than just donating money. We wanted to do something that directly impacted the lives of the victims and their families."

I thank the gentleman from Delaware (Mr. CASTLE) for stepping forward and for working with his constituents in Delaware to help our citizens in the gulf coast region.

Mr. Speaker, I will have to tell my colleagues one little story, too. While driving to Mississippi, I stopped in the gentleman from Alabama's (Mr. ADERHOLT) district. I was going to grab

a quick sandwich and get back on the road and continue driving so that we could get the load of supplies that we were taking down to where we wanted them to be.

I walked into the fast food restaurant. I was greeted at the counter by a friendly young man, big smile. I placed my order. He invited me to drop some change in the hurricane relief jar that they had put on the counter, and I thanked him for doing that, told him where I was heading, and he said, I have got to tell you, we are working with our congressman and his wife; we have got a great congressman and they are going to help us help some folks down in the gulf coast.

So we thank the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ADERHOLT), his staff and his family for taking the lead in Cullman, Alabama.

I really think this sums up some of what this country is feeling and how we are reaching out right now. It is certainly clear that this effort is having an impact on our kids.

In Kalamazoo, Michigan, third graders are selling pickles at school to raise money for the hurricane victims.

In Maryland, high school students are collecting thousands of backpacks for needy children.

A group of children in Forest Acres, South Carolina, spent their day off from school to help those in need. The students sold baked goods and lemonade on a neighborhood sidewalk. They raised \$145 in just a few hours, and all of it is going to help the victims and the families that are victims of Hurricane Katrina.

We, in Tennessee, have seen our great country music community come together in order to put their unique talents to work for the relief effort. This weekend in Oxford, Mississippi, there is an enormous concert. It is filled with country music stars. We thank them. They are performing, they are traveling, they are participating to raise money and raise awareness, raise the funds that are necessary to help hard-working Americans rebuild their lives and, as I said, raise awareness about what the true needs are in the gulf coast area.

Alan Jackson, Craig Morgan, Terri Clark, LeAnn Rimes, Marty Stuart, Keith Urban, Alison Kraus, just to name a few, sold out the 4,400-seat Grand Old Opry House to raise money. They were able to donate, get this, \$230,000 to the Red Cross.

One of our great Nashville companies, the Great American Country owner Scripps Network, they contributed \$1 million.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on because America has once again risen to the challenge. The American people have been incredibly generous, but I want to end this time tonight with this. To every individual, to every community who is out there, helping to ease the suffering of our friends in the gulf coast, I want to say thank you. I want to encourage them to keep up the

good work because, indeed, Mr. Speaker, this is what we are a great Nation of, freedom, free people who group together to stand together to help one another and to be there to support one another when times are tough.

Mr. Speaker, we thank them all for their contribution to this Nation. We thank them for their commitment to being certain that American families, that American communities continue to be the beacon of light and hope and freedom for the entire world.

### 30 SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REICHERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, once again, it is an honor to come before the House, and we would like to thank the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the Democratic leader, for allowing us to have an hour here on the floor on the Democratic side.

Our 30 Something Working Group has been coming to the floor now for the second Congress, talking about issues that are facing Americans, issues that we are working on here in the Congress, issues that are facing the Congress and things that we feel very strongly about. Every week, we come together to talk about these issues and then we come to the floor.

As of recent, we have been coming to the floor if not every other day, every day, because there are so many issues that are facing the country and this Congress. I think it is important that we continue to not only speak to the Members of this House of Representatives and this Congress, but this administration and the American people.

We have been talking for quite a few weeks now on the action or lack of action as it relates to Hurricane Katrina. We have had a couple of events today that I think is worthy of merit of discussing, and also, as it relates to still, Mr. Speaker, pointing out the fact that we have over 100,000 Americans still in shelters, some based on the fact that we have had a natural disaster, two natural disasters, but some based on the fact of we have not governed in the way that we should have governed to protect those Americans.

Many of the experiences that these Americans have gone through and loss of life has been a breakdown in government operation. Either it be local or State or Federal, it is important that we address these issues.

Before we really get into what we are here to talk about tonight, the last time we left this floor, we talked about an independent panel, a bipartisan independent panel outside of this Congress, to deal with the issues that are facing some may say, well, it is just dealing with the gulf States, but I think that is an understatement. I think we are dealing with all Ameri-

cans when we are talking about \$200 billion-plus of the Federal tax dollars.

I can also share with my colleagues and Members, Mr. Speaker, the fact that it is disturbing to see some of the proposals that are coming out from the majority side that are saying that we should sell 13 national parks to pay for the natural disaster or we should look at wasteful spending. Of course, we have been talking about looking at wasteful spending for a very long time. Of course, the majority side has taken us into a deficit as far as the eye can see, but I think it is important for us to look at Americans that understand that we have to respond to Americans when they are in their time of need, not take away from.

We need to address issues like oil companies making more money than they have ever made before, record profits. Meanwhile, Americans cannot even fill their tank. Folks in my neighborhood, where I come from, they are having to park their cars. The President is saying conserve; if you do not need gas, do not get it. I do not quite get that, but Americans need gas to be able to take their families to work and their children to school.

There are some very interesting statements, some very interesting actions, here in Washington, DC. I think it is important that we not only point out to the Members what the American people, in this time that we live in now here in this country, with all eyes on this Federal Government, that we act responsibly.

I think it is also important that we address the issue of protecting the institution. This institution, which is the U.S. Congress, wherein the Members of the 109th Congress, regardless of whether we are on the majority side or the minority side, it is our responsibility to keep this argument above the belt, and I am very disturbed, at a time of national disaster, in a time of need, that Americans need this Congress, that we are still moving as business as usual.

I am talking about the partisan panel that has been passed by this House to look into what happened in Hurricane Katrina. I know that a couple of hearings have taken place, but it is very disturbing that Americans have to see that we are working against what they have asked for.

Here in my hand I hold a CNN-USA Today poll that was taken the 16th through 18th. Anyone, I am pretty sure, can go on the Web site. I just want to make sure no one sees this as the Kendrick Meek Report or the Tim Ryan Report or the Ms. Wasserman Schultz Report.

The question goes as follows: As you know, some people have called for an investigation into the problems the government had in responding to Hurricane Katrina. Who would rather see conduct this investigation, independent panel or Congress?

Now, it does say problems the government had in responding to Hurri-

cane Katrina. It did not say the Federal Government. It did not say the State government. It did not say the local government. So I want to put that aside because some folks are playing this game as though it is some conspiracy theory to go after the Federal Government because they did not do what they were supposed to do and the local government did what they did right; they had no wrong.

Eighty-one percent, independent panel, 81 percent; 18, Congress. One percent was unsure. I am pretty sure if the question was put out on the issue of do you want a partisan panel to look at the response to the natural disasters, I am pretty sure they would have been a lot lower to Congress, and that is what is happening right now.

I, once again, say that it is important that we have an independent panel. What we mean by independent panel, just like the 9/11 Commission, that brought about the kind of accountability that we are having now. All has not been implemented that the 9/11 Commission called for, but a lot has improved as it relates to communications, the State, Federal and local governments, and I think it is important that we follow that.

Also, I know that we are going to talk about some of the cronyisms, some of the corruption that is going on around, not only this body, but throughout the government structure, and it is important, and I think a lot of this has brought about a lack of oversight, even when it comes down for some of the candidates for some of these appointments as it relates to the plum list, that have been well-documented, these are not my words, well-documented throughout the media and also as it relates to watchdog groups that are watching the Congress for what we do, and the President for what he does.

□ 2100

And I think we have to be responsible to the American people, Democrat, Republican, Independent alike. We have to make sure individuals that are being placed in these positions have some level of qualifications to be able to fill the position so that American people are not left vulnerable.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield to either of my colleagues, whichever wants to start this discussion.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to join in, and I thank the gentleman again for having me here. There is a lot going on here in Washington. And just to kind of follow up where the gentleman was going, we had about 70- or 80-some e-mails just last week talking about we want to have an independent commission and it should be removed from the traditional partisan bickering that goes on in this Chamber; there should be an independent counsel and independent commission that oversees what is going on with Katrina.